

“LIFE FOR A LOOK”
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A SERMON
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“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”
Isaiah 45:22

SINCE this text was blessed to my conversion many years ago, I have often preached from it, but on this occasion, I am not going to speak of it as a whole. There is only one thought that I shall endeavor to bring out of it, and I intend to act as the gold-beaters do with the metal upon which they work, that is, beat it out very thin, and perhaps, when it covers a wide surface, some may be able to see it who have not previously perceived its preciousness and power.

The great sin of man ever since he has fallen, has been that of idolatry. He is ever seeking to get away from God, who is real, but whom he cannot see, and to make for himself a god, which can only be an idol, but which pleases him because he can gaze upon it. And thus it comes to pass that some with images of wood and stone, and others with carnal confidences and the like, put something else into the place which should be occupied by God alone, and they look to that something, and expect good from it, instead of looking for all good to God, and to Him alone.

This looking to anything which usurps the place of God cannot but be most offensive to Him, and it must also be very disappointing to ourselves, for it is impossible for the false god to yield us any true comfort. When matters come to a pinch, and we really need succor, we shall find that we have been leaning upon a broken reed if we have been trusting to anything except the Lord our God.

For a while the idolater may delight himself in the idol which he has so dexterously carved, and which he has covered with silver plates, and adorned with golden chains, but when he finds that he cries in vain to his god in the day of trouble—when he discovers that no answer comes to his earnest prayer—in his disappointment and vexation of spirit, he is ready to lie down in despair.

It must be so, more or less, with all of us. If we trust in anything but God, we shall be disappointed, and if we are living for anything but the unseen One, who created and still sustains us, we shall have to lie down in sorrow despite the sparks of the fire we have ourselves kindled.

Yet note the Lord’s great patience even with those who are thus provoking Him by this idolatry of theirs. What do you think, sirs? If you had made men, and sustained them, and provided for them, yet they did not worship you, or serve you, or fear you, or trust you, but instead, transferred their fear, or love, or trust, to mere idols that had eyes, but could not see, and had hands, but could not help—would you not feel righteously angry? Would it not grieve you to have a dead thing, which these people had themselves made, put into your place? I am sure it would, and the Lord our God is a jealous God, and He has been, generation after generation, provoked by the idolatries of men.

Yes, and He has even been provoked by us who profess to be His people, but who have loved something else better than we have loved Him. Why, some of us have actually trusted ourselves more than we have trusted the Lord, and sometimes, in the hour of trial, we have fled to a friend, and relied upon an arm of flesh, instead of trusting in the Lord alone.

Yet how patient He has been under it all! And how blessedly this chapter teaches us of the lovingkindness of the Lord! Here He admonishes His ancient people with great gentleness, while He also reasons with great force of argument. Tenderly He chides the wrongdoers, and then earnestly He invites them to a better way. He seems to say to them, “Have done with these idols once and for all. You

have come into trouble and difficulty through looking to them, yet they could not save you, now turn away from them and look to Me. Though you are like the very ends of the earth, and have gone as far away from Me as you could, as if you would escape from My presence altogether if that were possible, yet now, in the hour of your distress, turn your eyes unto Me, and see if I will not help you. Come and trust Me just this once. ‘Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.’” Listen to this divine message, you who have forgotten your God, as in these gracious terms, He bids you turn your eyes unto Him, and let your expectations be from Him.

Our text, as I read it, teaches me, first, that *for salvation out of any trouble, we should look to God alone*. When I have spoken briefly upon that point, I shall carry the principle into deeper spiritual matters by showing you, in the second place, that *for eternal salvation, we must assuredly look to God alone*.

I. First then, FOR SALVATION OUT OF ANY TROUBLE, WE SHOULD LOOK TO GOD ALONE.

You know, brethren, that there are some troubles in which men do look to God alone. I have known even the most profane, godless men turn to God, after a fashion, in the hour of supreme peril. It has often been observed that men, in time of storm or shipwreck—those who had used blasphemous language and ridiculed all religion, when they have been caused to reel to and fro, and stagger like drunken men, and have been at their wits’ end, they have cried unto the Lord in their trouble.

And in earthquakes, when the very globe itself does rock and reel, as though it were as unstable as the restless sea, and huge buildings are rent in pieces, and strong towers come tumbling down, thousands of men have cried aloud to God to save them. Knees, unused to devotion, have been bent in abject terror, while hearts, that never felt the gracious presence of God, have begun to tremble at the majestic display of His power.

This kind of experience has often been witnessed in ungodly men at the approach of death. When, at last, the chill drops stand on their brow, when they know that life is almost over, and their soul is melting in their dire distress and the dark gates of the grave stand wide open before them—then they also cry unto the Lord in their trouble.

Now, if men will act thus by the compulsion of great calamity, is there not sound reason why you should, cheerfully and willingly, do the same, and resort to God in every trial, and difficulty, and dilemma? Why do not men seek divine help in other matters also? It is evident that God’s hand is in other things besides shipwrecks, and earthquakes, and death, and it has often been proved that He is able to help in the lesser troubles as well as the greater ones.

It is the Lord that quickens the wheels of commerce, or that stays them, and so causes distress. It is the Lord that permits the good and the evil which happen to men. “Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?” Is there a cry or a wail in war that God does not hear? Then why should we not go to Him in every time of peril and trouble—even in the minor trials and difficulties of life? Why must we have a severe sickness in order to drive us to God? Why is it that only the very peril of life brings us to our knees?

It ought not to be so—especially with the Lord’s own children. Is anything too unimportant for the Lord to notice? Is any trial too slight for you to bring in prayer before Him? If you, fathers, listen to your children’s little tales of sorrow—if you, mother, with your needle, deftly take out the tiniest thorn from your child’s hand, how much more will your Father, who is in heaven, note all the little trials you have to bear in this life, and deliver you out of them all! Look unto Him then, and be ye saved out of all the trials that beset you.

Brethren and sisters, we ought to habitually look to God—in the morning, looking to Him for the mercies of the day, at night, looking to Him for the pardon that shall cover the day’s offenses—in the morning, expecting strength for the day’s burden, and in the evening, laying down the burden at the Master’s feet, and blessing Him for the grace which has sustained us.

“But,” says one, “may we not use means to help us out of our difficulties?” Of course you may, you would be wrong if you did not. He who bids you pray for harvest, would have you sow your seed. He who would have you ask to be guided all your journey through, would have you also follow industriously the track of the fiery cloudy pillar. Yes, use the means, but mind that you trust in God while you use the means, and trust in God beyond all means, and when means utterly fail, and you have come to the limit of the tether of your own wit and skill, then feel as if you were flung into the bare arms of God, and confide all the more because there is nothing else that you can do.

You are not to make faith in God an excuse for idleness. It would be equally wrong to make your industry a pretext for trusting to yourselves, instead of confiding only in God. Let this be the rule of your whole life. For all things, trust in God; in all matters, submit to God; and in all ways, serve God. You may take this divine command, “Look unto me,” as the motto which shall illuminate your pathway at all times.

You can stand safely on the high hills of prosperity as long as you look unto Him, and even in the chilly valley of adversity, your heart shall rejoice while you keep looking unto Him. You may go forth to battle against innumerable foes, and conquer them all while you look unto Him. You may lie upon the bed of sickness, and be able to bear your pain with patience while you look unto Him, and you shall come, at last into the valley of death-shade, death’s sullen stream shall begin to flow over your feet, and chill your heart’s blood, but if you are still looking unto the Lord, the promise of our text shall be fulfilled to you, and you shall be saved, for He is God, and beside Him there is none else.

II. Now, secondly, while this is the principle which should guide all believers, it is also the right principle for those who are beginning to be believers, that is, those who are seeking the salvation of their souls. **FOR ETERNAL SALVATION, WE MUST LOOK TO GOD ALONE.**

I want to keep you to this point if I can, so I ask you to remember first, that *salvation is not to be found in any mere agent*. The idolatry, which leads some men to make blocks of wood and stone into objects of worship, has led others to make gods of what are called “the means of grace,” selecting this or that matter—sometimes, that which is of divine appointment, and sometimes, things which are the result of human invention.

At one time, you may find a man resting the whole weight of his soul on what he calls “sacraments.” Has he not been baptized, and is he not therefore a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven? He goes regularly to what he calls “Holy Communion,” and he supposes that he has received grace by the eating of “consecrated” bread and the drinking of “consecrated” wine. But beloved, “sacraments” become mere idols, just as much as the false gods of the Hindu, when we expect salvation from them. We have put the Christian ordinances altogether out of their place when we have allowed them to usurp the position which belongs only to the Savior.

I do not suppose that many of you will do this, yet I am sometimes afraid that you may fall into an equal error of much the same character. Some people seem to suppose that because God blesses the hearing of sermons (and He does bless it, even as He blesses other means that He has ordained), therefore they shall surely be saved through the hearing of sermons, or because good books are often exceedingly useful and lead men to Christ, they expect that by reading such books, they shall be saved, and especially, because the Bible itself is the best of books—the Book of God, and the God of books—because it gives much light to those who are in darkness, they suppose that if they search the Scriptures, they will have eternal life.

Now, dear friends, sermons, good books, and even the Bible itself, may be made into idols, if you look to them for salvation, and expect that by hearing and by reading, and going no further, you will be saved. You must go beyond all these things, and get to God Himself, and say with David, “My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.”

The two Christian ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s supper are precious things. The ministry of the Word—and the inspired Word as we have it recorded in this Book—these are precious things, but they are only like the porch through which we pass to get to God Himself. If a man stays in the porch,

instead of passing through it to the great Host of the house, he misses the design and end of the porch, which is not intended to keep the man upon the threshold, but that he should pass through it, and find the God who dwells within.

It is very easy to look to mere agents for salvation, but it is not to be found there. “Salvation is of the LORD,” and of the Lord alone. No man in the world can accomplish this great work. The psalmist had learned that lesson when he wrote, “None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him.” Though a man should speak with the tongues of men and of angels, yet, if you are not led, by his speech, to look to God for salvation, you will not be saved, and though the ordinances of God’s house are observed before you in all their sacred simplicity, yet they can yield you no profit if you do not pass beyond that which is seen by the eye, and look unto the great invisible God, to whom your soul must draw nigh, in spirit and in truth, if you are ever to find salvation.

Does someone ask, “To what then, are we to look?” I will try to tell you if you will listen. You are guilty, so in order that you may be saved, you need to have your sins pardoned, and you need also that your heart should be renewed by God’s almighty grace. So, *the great thing that you need to know, and look at, and rely upon, is the mercy of God.* Especially do you think much of the greatness of that mercy. If your sin be great, remember that it is so, and mourn over it, but recollect also that God’s mercy is a bottomless, boundless ocean, which can swallow up and cover forever, the great mountain of your guilt. The merciful God is able to put away all your sin.

Think too, of the freeness of that mercy, which asks nothing at your hand—no price, no bribe, to move the heart of God to take pity upon you, for his heart burns with love of itself. It does not need you to bring anything to make Him love you, or to incline Him to be ready to forgive you. He is so already from the very force of His own character. God’s mercy is free, and full, and rich, and abundant. To Moses, He “proclaimed the name of the LORD” in that remarkable utterance, “The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin.” He clasps His lost child to His bosom, and rejoices that he is found.

Yet remember also that God’s mercy is sovereign, that He saves whom He will, and that there is no reason known to you, why He should not save you as well as any other sinner, especially since that sovereignty of His is generally displayed toward the most unlikely and undeserving. Well says the apostle, “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise: and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence.”

Ponder this great truth, and then say to your soul, “I, a guilty sinner, needing salvation, must look for it to the rich, full, free, ever-flowing, over-flowing, sovereign, everlasting mercy of God.” O eye that weeps because of sin, behold this glorious attribute of the God of mercy and of grace, and let your tears be dry!

Then, since God says, “Look unto me,” let me ask you *whether you are looking unto Him as He has revealed Himself to us in His Word.* If you simply look to God as He reveals Himself in nature, you will have but a very imperfect view of Him, and you will derive but little comfort from Him. We cannot possibly understand Him there as well as we do when He speaks to us, not by the signs and hieroglyphics of nature, but in the plain words that we can read in our own mother tongue in this blessed Book.

Therefore, if you would be saved, look to God here where He looks at you from the pages of His Word, and hear what He tells you there. He tells you, by almost innumerable promises, that He is ready to forgive your sin if you do repent of it, and trust His Son. Then, to His promises, He adds such gracious and cheering invitations as this, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall

be as wool,” and such loving exhortations as this, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

Read this blessed Book, search out its exceedingly great and precious promises, study its many invitations, and also examine the examples that are given in its records of the multitudes of sinners God has saved by His grace—the great sinners whom, in His abundant mercy, He has accepted, and made to be His children. Keep your eye fixed on God as He so graciously manifests Himself in the pages of His own Book, for then you will be able to cry, with the prophet Micah, “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.” O guilty soul, if you would find salvation, you have not to look to any priest, or to any book, or to any ceremony, or to any doings of your own, but to God as He has revealed Himself in His Word.

And especially is it intended that *we should look unto God as He reveals Himself in the person and work of His dear Son*. This is the very essence of the Gospel—that we should look to God in Jesus Christ, and so find salvation. That is where salvation is to be found, and nowhere else, “for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,” and “other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Look, then, to the Lord Jesus Christ if you would find salvation.

You say that you dare not come to God by reason of your great sin. You do well to regard your sin as great and to mourn over it, but you must not be content with doing that. Look away to Jesus, the great Sin-bearer, on whom was laid the iniquity of all who believe in Him, even as the prophet Isaiah says, “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” Look away from your sin, sinner, nay, rather, follow your sin as it is laid by God on the Sin-bearer’s shoulders, and as you look there, you will find salvation.

“But,” you say, “I have no merit to plead before God, I cannot hope to meet with acceptance in His sight.” Then listen to my text, God here says, “Look unto me, and be ye saved.” God, in the person of His well-beloved Son, shows the only method by which you can be accepted by Him. The perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ is both imputed and imparted to all who believe in Him, therefore, dream not of trusting in your own merits.

Indeed, you have none to trust in, a spider’s web is more substantial than the flimsy, fancied merits of the best man under heaven, but if you look to what Christ was and is, to what He did, and what He suffered, you will find the garment—the royal robe beyond all comparison for sumptuousness and beauty—in which you may wrap yourself for time and for eternity. If you put on this robe, friend, God will love you, and bless you, nay, I must reverse the order of my words, and say that because God has loved you, He has made it possible for you to take the righteousness of Christ to be your righteousness forever and ever.

“Ah!” says another; “but if I am to find salvation, I must escape from the power of sin, and I have no strength to do that.” I know you have not, do not think of looking to yourself to find any, but listen again to our text, “Look unto me, and be ye saved.” The sin, that you cannot master, Christ can conquer. He can make the lust that now binds you as with fetters of iron, to have no more power over you.

Have I not often seen this happen to a man who has been bound with chains that he could not break? But the Spirit of the Lord has come upon him, and he has snapped them as easily as Samson “brake the withs, as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire.” Poor manacled slave of sin, Christ can enable you to get your liberty, look not to what you can yourself do, for that is nothing, look only to the omnipotence that dwells in the eternal arm of the once-crucified Redeemer.

“But,” you cry, “I should never hold on even if I did once look to Christ. If I were to begin to believe in Him, I would be tempted, and should go back to the world.” I know you would if the matter rested with you, but if the Lord Jesus Christ begins to work upon you, He will persevere with the task until He

has fully accomplished it. Look to His faithfulness, for you have none apart from Him. Look you to His immutability, for you are as fickle as the wind that continually changes its course. Rest you wholly in the Christ who says to you, “Look unto me, and be you saved.”

“Oh!” you say, “but I have none of the gifts and graces that make up a Christian life.” That is quite true, but Christ is ready to give them to you. He is a full-handed and a freehanded Savior, and when He begins to bless sinners, riches untold are lavished upon them so that they become rich as kings through the spiritual wealth which Christ bestows upon them. There is nothing, that any one of us can want between here and heaven, but is stored up for us in Christ, and we are to look to Him alone for it. Oh, that the Lord would teach all of us this simple and blessed art, for this is the way of salvation! “Look unto me”—to God in Christ Jesus—“and be ye saved.”

Now I shall conclude by trying to strike this one nail on the head, and urging you to give your most earnest heed to this one matter of looking to God in Christ. Dear friend, you are seeking salvation, so the devil will make a dead set at you to try to keep you from looking unto Jesus. I cannot tell you exactly which way he will go to work, for he has many inventions, but I know that this will be one main point that he will drive at with you—*he will try to get you, not to look to God, but to look somewhere else.*

Now, if you are determined to look to yourself—if you feel that you cannot help doing so, mind that you never look to yourself without mourning, for every look at yourself ought to cost you a tear. Look to yourself that you may sorrow over your sinful state, but never look there with any hope of finding salvation. When a man is altogether bankrupt, will he go and look into his ledger for consolation? When a man’s house has been stripped by a distraint, will the poor penniless tenant go and gaze into the bare rooms to find comfort? When there is not a morsel of bread in the cupboard, will a man look into the empty dishes in order that he may appease the cravings of hunger? If the well is dry, what is the good of looking down to the bottom of it?

So, dear friend, if you do not understand your ruined condition, look at yourself; but if you do know that you are lost and undone, you might as well look to the grave for life as to yourself for salvation. Do not let the devil persuade you that there is anything good in you by nature, or that there is any hope of salvation for you in yourself. If he tells you that you are utterly bad, and ruined, and lost, believe him, for that is true, but if he ever tries to persuade you that there is some good in you, tell him that he lies, and you may also tell him that if there were any good in you, there would be no hope for you even in that, for your only hope lies in that utter hopelessness which drives you out of yourself to God.

You know how the high priest, under the old Jewish law, was commanded to treat the lepers who were brought before him. When there came a man, who said, “I think that my case is a very hopeful one, for I have a large spot of perfectly sound flesh on my arm, and I have another place on my foot, where my flesh is like that of a little child”—when the high priest heard the man say that and he looked upon him, and saw that it was even so, he said to him, “Alas! you are a hopeless leper, and must be shut outside the camp,” and there he remained till he died.

But there came another leper who was quite covered with the signs of the loathsome malady, and he said to the high priest, “My disease has gone to the very extreme, there is not a sound place in me, from the crown of my head to the sole of my feet, there is not a single spot that is not affected.” “Ah, my brother!” replied the high priest, “I am glad to hear you say that, and to be able to tell you that now you are clean.” It appears that when the leprosy threw itself out all over the body, the man would recover, but if it was only on a part of him, it was there forever.

Just so is it with the sinner, when he cannot see any good in himself, he is the man whom God will save, but as long as there is a spot of his own supposed goodness as big as a pin’s head, or a pin’s point, he is still suffering from the leprosy of sin, and must be shut away from the people of the Lord. “That is strange talk,” someone says. I hope it will be strangely comforting to some poor brokenhearted sinner, who has been well-nigh in despair, but who will now hope, believe, and live.

Do not let Satan take your eyes away from Christ by any other device. I have known him trouble poor souls with questions about difficult doctrines, or various forms of church government, or about the

disputes that arise even between Christian people. The sinner's one business is to look to Christ, and be saved, yet he will get bothering his head with this, and that, and the other, which he does not understand, and which he does not need to understand. Oh, what thousands of people there are who have some wonderful knot which they want to untie, and which they cannot untie! It would not make the slightest difference to them if it was untied, yet it keeps them from looking to God in Christ Jesus, that they may be saved.

You may ask about church government afterwards, you may decide further on, as to Calvinism or Arminianism, or as to the post-millennial or pre-millennial Advent of Christ, but those matters do not concern you now. When a man is drowning, he does not want to read “The Times” newspaper, or Adam Smith's “Wealth of Nations.” He needs someone to help him out of the water before he is quite dead, and that is what you need, my unsaved friend, you need salvation, and you can only obtain it by looking unto God in Christ Jesus.

I have known Satan also to take away a man's gaze from Christ by saying to him, “You do not know whether you are elect or not.” Well, it is a very important question whether a man is one of the elect of God, but I beg you to remember that an unsaved sinner has nothing to do with his election, and that it is not possible for him to know anything about that matter at present. When he has believed in Jesus Christ, then he will have the evidence that he is one of the Lord's chosen people, but until he has done so, he has no reason to think that he is elect.

Divine election is the eternal choice which God the Father has made, and there is no way of coming to the Father except by Christ His Son. Redemption is the word with which you are first concerned, then when you know the power of the precious blood of Jesus, you will have the proof of your election unto eternal life, and so you will begin to understand the “everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure.”

Sometimes—and this is a common trick of Satan's—he tries to make men look at their own faith, instead of looking unto Jesus. “See,” says he, “you have to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but have you the right kind of faith? Is yours the faith that saves?” Thus, he fixes your eye on your faith instead of on Christ, and then he will ask you, “Is your state of mind what it ought to be?” So you begin looking into your state of mind, and you inquire, “Have I a due sense of my need? Have I a proper realization of my dire necessities, and of the hardness of my heart?”

My dear friend, whatever your question may be—whether it is holy or profane—it is out of place just now. The only questions that concern you now are such as these—What has God revealed to me in His Word? What has God done for me through His Son? What does He say to me? What does He require of me? What does He promise to give me? You can find the answer to all those questions in our text, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.”

The devil tells you that you have not got the right kind of eyes, or that you have a squint, or that you have a cataract in one of your eyes, he will say anything to keep you from looking to God in Christ. Yet that is where you are to look, and it is on Him alone that you are to rely, and you are not to rely upon your reliance, nor on your faith, nor on your looking, but you are to place your complete dependence upon Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

I pray you to let these simple yet important truths sink into your mind and heart. Endeavor every day to know more of Jesus, and to that end, search the Scriptures that you may learn more and more of God in Christ as He is there revealed. Do try to think more about Him, you who are seeking the salvation of your souls. Get as much time as you can alone, that you may think of Jesus on the cross, and of all that God reveals to you in His dear bleeding wounds, for the more you know of Him, and the more you think of Him, the more will you be able to rely upon Him. Our confidence usually increases in proportion to our knowledge, if the thing known be really worthy of our trust. It is emphatically so with Christ. The more we know Him, the more we shall trust and love Him!

Settle this matter in your mind as an absolute certainty that *whoever and whatever you are, you may look to God in Christ, and be saved.* Do not let any doubt upon that point ever cross your mind. Our text

says, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth,” and there are many other passages which are quite as wide in the sweep of their invitation, such as these, “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely,” and “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out,” and the very Gospel commission itself, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Whosoever you may be, you have a perfect right to look to God, for He invites you to do so. Nay, more than that, you are bound to do so, for you are commanded to do it, and there is this dreadful threatening against all who disobey the command, “He that believeth not shall be damned.” Look you, then, to God in Christ, without fear, for looking unto Him, you shall be saved.

With this last point, I close. *Let no feeling of yours beat you off from looking to Christ.* If, when you look to God, your sins seem to rise, and howl at you, and say, “Who are you that you should trust in God?” keep on looking all the same. And if it appears to you that a thousand texts thunder against you, look you all the same. Look you to God even if He appears to look at you angrily. Run you to His arms, for it is your only place of shelter. If He takes His rod to chastise you, still run to His arms. He cannot smite you half so heavily as if His arm gets full swing at a distance from you.

Lay hold on God’s strength. Just as the child, when his father is going to flog him, lays hold of his father’s hands, and with his tears melts His father’s heart, so do you. Lay hold on the strength of God, and tell Him that you will trust in Him. Even if He shall still seem to threaten you, tell Him that you know that He delights in mercy—that you have heard of great sinners, like yourself, being saved by Him—and that you believe that Christ’s precious blood will make you clean, and that you will continue to believe it come what may.

Will He reject you if you come to Him thus? That is impossible. He never did shake off a soul that thus clung to His arm, He never drove from the door of His mercy one who was resolved to die upon the threshold of His house rather than trust to anyone else. So let nothing turn you from looking to Jesus. Even if you walk without a ray of light—if you should be tried in circumstances, and so afflicted in body as to be at death’s door, remember that the Lord has said, “Look unto me, and be ye saved.”

Do you hang upon that blessed word, and this also, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Carry out both parts of that text, and when you have done so, claim the fulfillment of the promise, feeling sure that the mountains shall melt away, and the seas be lifted up with flaming tongues of fire, sooner than God shall be false to the promise He has made to you, unworthy though you are, if you believe in Jesus Christ, and are baptized after His own example.

May God the Holy Spirit enable you thus to look to Christ, for looking to Him, as surely as He lives, you too shall live, and as surely as God is true, you shall be saved, for you are saved the moment you believe in God through Christ Jesus His Son.

I have not attempted to set these great truths before you in fine language, for I want them to come home to the heart of everyone here present who is not yet saved. I recollect when I used to go to various places of worship meaning business, and my business was, to try to find a Savior if there really was one for me. I am sure that if anybody in the whole place used to listen with both ears, and all his heart, I did. I did not care anything about the preacher’s elocution, the one thing that I wanted to know was, what I must do to be saved.

Am I addressing anyone in a similar case? If so, O you poor soul, convinced of sin, I assure you that if you believe in Christ Jesus, you shall be saved! Understand clearly, however, what the salvation is that He will give you. It is not salvation from the consequences of your sin while you continue to indulge in it. He will save you from being the sinner that you now are. The ancient covenant promise runs thus, “From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.”

I can see some people, sitting before me now, who, if they had been told a few years ago, that they would be what they now are, would have laughed such a notion to scorn, they would have poured the utmost contempt upon the speaker. “What!” such a man would have said, “I—the man of pleasure—ever

be found among canting hypocritical professors of religion? It is not likely.” Many a man has said, “I know how to look after myself, I need none of the grace of God of which you think so much.” Yet there are many such persons here at this moment, and they are rejoicing in the very thing they once despised, and their lives are now so altered that no two persons could be more different than their present self is from their old self.

I am afraid their old self still occasionally visits them, but I am sure that they never show him indoors. They try, if they can, to push him into the back yard, and they get rid of him as quickly as possible. I have known many a one of this sort cry out, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this old enemy of mine? I never want to see him again.” The change is marvelous between what he was and what he is, and such a change as that must be wrought in secret.

Our Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Read that third chapter of John’s Gospel through, and before you get to the end of it, you will find that the very same chapter, in which the new birth is insisted upon by our Lord, also has these verses in it, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Both doctrines are true, and perfectly consistent with each other—the free grace of God, and the necessity of a change of heart and life. May you prove them consistent in your own experience, and then we will glorify God together forever and ever. Amen and Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—267, 535, 538

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.